WHIRRAKEE

September 2016

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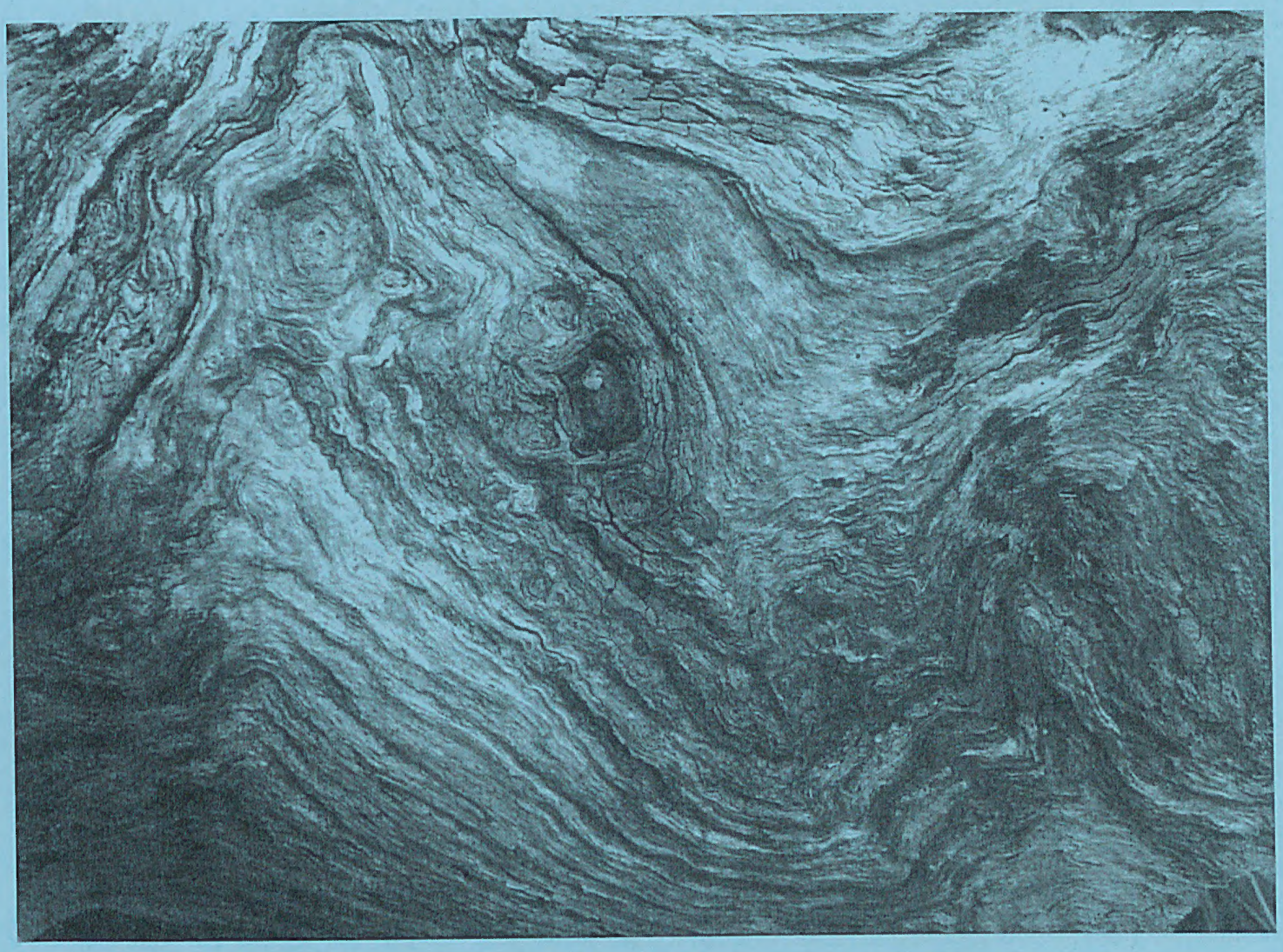

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552.
ISSN 0812-423X

Website: www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au E-mail address: info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au

Office Bearers for 2015 - 2016

President	*vacant*	
Vice President	Alistair White	0419 613 737
Secretary/Public Officer	Matt Comer	0409 162 627
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	

Positions delegated by the Committee

Minute Secretary	Anne Bridley (for general meetings)	
Excursion sub-committee	**John Lindner**, Simon Hay, Richard Goonan	**5448 3406**
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Jess Milroy	
Garden sub-committee	Kerrie Norris, Jess Milroy	
Observations coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Supper coordinators	Alistair White, Jess Milroy	
Hall management sub-committee	**Maurie Lewis**, Rob & Glenise Moors, Ben Goonan	**0407427179**
Whirrakee sub-committee	Sabine Wilkens, Alistair White, John McCallum, Ben Goonan	
Whirrakee contact/editor	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797
Whirrakee mailing coordinator	Jenny Shield	
Website sub-committee	Ben Goonan, **John McCallum**	**54439347**
Bullying and Harassment Officer	Simon Hay	0410 424 686

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $40; Family $50; Concession: Single $35; Family $40. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $40.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Hall, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with members sharing their recent natural history observations. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Devi Shanty, Simon Hay, John McCallum, Richard Goonan, Karen Thomas, Jess Milroy

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Hall, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Hall. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188. To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 37, No. 8, September 2016

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*), which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions should be posted or e-mailed to the editor at least two days prior to the last Wednesday of the month. They will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although space restrictions occasionally require shortening of articles or holding them over till the following edition of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
This month we are celebrating our Annual General Meeting. This is an opportunity to give a bit of rest to some office bearers and committee members, who have been working very hard, and to welcome new and enthusiastic members to help with the running of the club. Perhaps you are one of them? If you have not decided, it is not too late – just come along to the meeting on Wednesday. The scheduled speaker will be talking about an unusual topic, one we don't often talk about…
Also, apologies for filling two of the four photo pages with my holiday photos. Our regular photographer is away this month, so I had fewer photos than usual. The Grampians are beautiful though and definitely worth the trip. Please send in your spring photos, as I have run out for the moment…

Front page photograph:
Without a scale bar, this picture could be interpreted as a moonscape, a barren mountain range, a rock formation or a tree trunk. We always try to look for patterns and pictures in the swirls and curves of such images. What picture do you see?
I wonder what condition this fallen tree trunk has seen? Possibly some rough ones.

Short Notices

BFNC Wild Weekly Walks – Nature Knowledge Exchange
Excursions, 9am-12pm Saturdays
Meet at 8:50am at the Golden Square Hall to attend. Please carry with you some water and a light snack, along with clothing suitable for the prevailing conditions. Walks will be short and of easy to moderate difficulty, suitable for anyone with a basic level of fitness.
The dates and destinations for September are the following: September 3 – Mandurang, September 10 – Salomon Gully, September 17 – Wellsford, September 24 – Wildflower Drive. BYO snacks and come prepared for the weather
Call Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au to find out more or check the club's website at http://www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au for the latest updates.

Naturalist Workshops
Throughout the year, the Club has been running a series of Naturalist Workshops specifically designed to develop participants' proficiency across a broad range of field based naturalist skills and knowledge. They are designed to cater for a wide range of abilities and use a participatory/interactive model, where participants learn from one another in a friendly and welcoming environment.

Workshop 11: Members' night: a chance to share your naturalist observations and stories
Presenters: Members (coordinated by Matt Comer)
Date: 28th September 2016
Time: 7:00pm, Golden Square Hall
RSVP: Please register your interest via info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or by post to PO Box 396 Bendigo VIC 3552.
What to bring: Enthusiasm! **Important:** Those interested in sharing their observations or stories via images projected on the big screen must organise their images (2-15 or so) and bring them to the **General Meeting** on a memory stick for Matt to copy (This is to make sure they work and to have them properly set up for display on the night). We don't want to waste half the night trying to get things to work - we want to hear about your observations! Other suitable items to illustrate your observation or story are welcome including drawings, printed images, field notes, equipment, specimens, etc.
All presenters must contact Matt via 0409 162 627 to register their intention to share an observations or story. **More information** at www.bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au or info@bendigofieldnaturalists.asn.au

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BFNC Excursion to Knowsley SF, Sunday 18th September 2016

Location: Knowsley SF, east of Axedale.
Leaders: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors
Meet at Golden Square Hall at 9am, returning by about 4pm. The round trip is roughly 70km.
Details: The Knowsley forest contains a good variety of bird life, including Hooded and Yellow Robins and Wedge-tailed Eagles as well as some old Yellow Box. This is a chance to visit a perhaps overlooked patch of our local bushland.
Activities: bird-watching, botany. There will be short walks of up to a km, some of which will be off track and on uneven ground. There will be opportunities to practice listening to and identifying bird calls.
Equipment: bring binoculars, field guides, camera, notebooks, lunch and snacks, drinks, wet weather gear, sunscreen. something to sit on.

The committee would like to highlight to club members that our AGM is this month, and it is not too late to consider the positions of office bearers, committee members and appointed roles within the club. A nomination form will have been included in last months' *Whirrakee* and should be returned to the secretary as soon as possible before the AGM (or else just bring it to the September meeting). We hope you will consider how you can best serve our wonderful club.

Spring Orchids (photographed by Joy Clusker) on one of the recent Saturday walks to Sedgwick (6th August)

Nodding Greenhood *Pterostylis nutans*,

Small Mosquito Orchid, *Acianthus pusillus*

Slaty Helmet Orchid, *Corybas incurvus*, we only found one in flower.

Editor's note: This orchid is also listed under the name Corysanthes incurva. It seems that the first name comes from 1988 (Jones and Clem) and the second from the same authors from 2002.

I admire people who can find these orchids amongst the complexity of the forest floor; they are tiny (as the small moss plants growing beside it indicate).

More from Joy Clusker and the Saturday morning walks
these photos are from the Boronia patch in Spring Gully. The fence is in dire need of fixing…

Below: Scented Sundew, *Drosera whittakeri* On the right, Nerrima is explaining to us that the red rhizomorphs produce more plants

There were still plenty of fungi, big and small. The tiny one (left) is a *Marasmius* sp. , the large is *Tremella mesenterica*, which parasitises the *Stereum hirsutum* it is sharing the tree with.

An interesting scat, spotted in the Grampians at the end of August. Who did it and what has this animal been eating? (photo by S. Wilkens)

Spring in the Grampians (by Sabine Wilkens)
We spent the last weekend in August checking out the Grampians. They were ablaze with Wattles, particularly *Acacia mucronata* and *Acacia longifolia* (?), but there were many other species besides.
On the right is the exquisite Grampians Thryptomene (*Thryptomene calycina*). Because the flowers are so small, it is difficult to see that the centre comes in two colours. I wonder whether they signify the fertilization status of the flower or something else. Does anybody know?

Some of us had a debate whether the pink buds of the plant below will turn into the beard heath (*Leucopogon ericoides*). I guess the common name (pink beard heath) might answer that question…

Grevillea gariwerdensis
(Halls Gap Botanic Gardens)

Left:
Grampians She-oak, *Allocasuarina grampiana*, female flowers

Right: Hairy Correa, *Correa aemula*

Some non-flowering beauties, also from the Grampians

Left: a spongy fungus, growing on a cut tree stump
Below: Unfurling fern fronds are a beautiful thing to see (photo by Bruce Johnson)

Left: a delicate maidenhair fern

Below: in shady spots are a wonderful array of mosses and liverworts (photo by Bruce Johnson). The arrow points at the liverwort's umbrella-shaped sexual reproductive structures

On the left is a close-up of the asexual reproductive structures of this liverwort. The tiny 'gemmae' in the pockets (see arrow) are less than half a mm across and, when dispersed to a suitable environment, grow into new liverworts

The bright orange fungus below was about 2cm across.

Coliban Water Plant, Epsom, Water bird survey, 12/8/16

Author: Anne Bridley

John Lindner, Glenise Moors, Jan Orr and myself surveyed lagoon #6 and May Swamp on 12/8/16. Numbers of birds were generally down, and the water level in May Swamp was higher than usual. A highlight of the morning was the displaying male Musk Ducks with their throat pouches inflated, whistling and water splashes to their sides. With all these attempts to attract attention, a couple of females were showing some interest.

The following birds were recorded:

Musk Duck	5
Black Swan	3
Australian Wood Duck	4
Pacific Black Duck	1
Australasian Shoveler	2
Grey Teal	35
Chestnut Teal	6
Hoary-headed Grebe	4
Little Pied Cormorant	2
Great Cormorant	5
Australian Pelican	2
Australian White Ibis	6
Black Kite	1
Whistling Kite	2
Swamp Harrier	1
Little Eagle	2
Purple Swamp-hen	7
Dusky Moorhen	1
Eurasian Coot	110
Crested Pigeon	
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1
Laughing Kookaburra	1
White-plumed Honeyeater	
Rainbow Lorikeet	2
Galah	
Musk Lorikeet	Crimson Rosella
Eastern Rosella	Red-rumped Parrot
Superb Fairy-wren	Red Wattlebird
Noisy Miner	Flame Robin 1
Grey Shrike-thrush	Magpie-lark
Willie Wagtail	Grey Butcherbird
Australian Magpie	Australian Raven
Little Raven	Red-browed Finch
European Goldfinch	Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin	Fairy Martin
Little Grassbird	Common Blackbird

Saturday Naturalist Walk: Wildflower Drive, 7th May

by Richard Goonan

The Heathy Woodland section of Wildflower Drive has been an area of particular interest for me over many years, and I have revisited the site many times learning something new on each occasion. Revisiting areas over time, observing changes through the seasons, and watching recovery from fire has revealed many insights to the ecological responses of different plant species. These insights from individual species combine to form a broader understanding (and appreciation) of the ecological processes which influence the site. Admittedly, the visual effects of the planned burn conducted at the site in 2009 were initially very confronting. Watching the process of recovery has been a fascinating opportunity to learn about how species respond and the processes that create (shape and reshape) habitat in a variety of positive ways.

The group began our walk with a visit to a patch of *Hakea decurrens* (Silky Hakea) that I had surveyed before the burn and which was then burnt during the fire. The initial effect was a loss of many mature individuals in the patch. Subsequent wind damage (or perhaps kids?) knocked several of the remaining large mature shrubs over. These two disturbances have left few of the original plants remaining alive. Our recent visit also revealed that the few remaining original plants have now almost completely died following the dry summer period of 2015/16. We did find a large number of seedling recruits growing well and although it will be another 4-5 years before the present cohort begin to produce abundant seed reserves, this patch has remained viable and is growing well.

After checking-in with the Hakea, the group conducted a search for *Persoonia rigida* (Hairy Geebung) seedlings to see if this species had survived the fire event. I had observed some large specimens in the area before the fire and was interested to know if seedling recruitment had been stimulated since the fire. While the large mature shrubs were killed by the fire, the group did find lots of seedling recruits (of varying sizes) growing

throughout the area. While some species respond rapidly following fire, others take more time, these *Persoonia* appear to have an initial response time of 2-4 years before seedlings begin to re-establish and become more obvious.

Some parts of the area have been degraded by past gravel extraction and this has left some sections with very low vegetation cover. When the planned burn was carried out, some of the scattered vegetation growing in the disturbed areas was burnt. This appeared at the time to be extreme and potentially negative, however the result has been very positive. The fire has facilitated accelerated recruitment in these degraded areas and a range of species have begun establishing more abundantly. In contrast to some of the degraded areas not burnt, there has been a noticeably positive effect, likely as a result of both fire and higher rainfall in the years following the burn. Rainfall alone does not appear to stimulate the full range of recruitment at levels where fire has also occurred. Obviously fire alone, during times of low rainfall results in limited recruitment, so the effects can sometimes be confusing to interpret if you don't pay close attention.

Another interesting contrast can be made between areas of the heath that were not burnt and adjacent areas within the fire area. While the structure of the heath has been temporarily altered (e.g. regrowing plants such as *Calytrix tetragona* (Common Fringe-myrtle) are shorter and more open with less dead material), the range of shrub species present (composition) is generally equal. The proportion of some species is also slightly different with slower growing species such as *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne heath) still at a slightly lower abundance. Some faster responding species however, such as *Prostanthera denticulata* (Rough Mint Bush) and *Grevillea alpina* (Cats Claws) now occur at an equivalent or generally higher abundance growing as healthy vigorous plants.

Large woody debris is widely recognised as a critical habitat resource for a broad range of fauna. Before the burn very few logs occurred throughout the area and most of the trees were coppice regrowth without large canopies. One of the most confronting visual effects of the fire was the change in overstorey structure. Many of the coppice trees collapsed, I was initially very distressed to see this, but realise now how important this has been in rapidly and dramatically increasing the habitat values of the site. In just 5-6 years much of the coppice has recovered a partial (or full) canopy, many (but not all) of the larger trees also survived (particularly Long Leaf Box) and while they lost a few major limbs, they are now growing strongly. The addition of some thick epicormic growth along trunks and branches has also provided additional habitat which is otherwise absent in long unburnt areas. The thick epicormic growth stimulated by fire adds structural complexity to the canopy habitat available. Throughout the area, seedling trees are now growing and these will provide essential habitat trees with a correct natural growth form long into the future. Critically, the many fallen trees have re-created a vital habitat component that would not have been present today without the disturbance process (fire), and the seedling trees would also be unlikely to have grown. So, while the coppice has effectively replaced itself (no net loss), two important elements - seedling recruits and large woody debris - have been created as a direct result of the fire event.

Another striking difference since the fire has been the addition of a midstorey habitat which was largely absent before the fire. Mixed patches of *Acacia pycnantha* (Golden Wattle) and *Cassinia arcuata* (Chinese Scrub) have grown up among the coppice regrowth creating a mosaic of some areas with low open heath and other areas of denser taller shrubs/saplings.

Before leaving, the group stopped to look at an unusual patch of *Acacia williamsonii* (Whirrakee Wattle) nearby. Some of these were also burnt and it's pleasing to see many new recruits growing vigorously that will maintain the patch. On the way out we also stopped to observe species responses in the areas where Duck Orchids grow. This is another interesting patch of Heath, and while the recovery of this area appears slower,

(possibly due to the influence of higher canopy cover including *Eucalyptus tricarpa* (Ironbark) which can suppress other species), there is many good signs. It's also worth noting that many of the plants in this patch were already dead before the area was burnt (due to preceding drought years), so they weren't killed by fire, the fire just made the loss of these plants within the patch more obvious.

I look forward to another visit here in spring to continue learning. See the club website for updates on the upcoming listed walks.

Committee Notes, 17 August 2016

New and on-going business included the following items.

- Membership Renewals are now due. The committee encourages all members to renew their membership as soon as possible. Thank you to those who have already done this.
- Positions of responsibility in the Club are committee appointments; members currently holding such positions will be contacted and others are invited to put their names forward. In particular, the committee is currently seeking a Minutes Taker for general meetings, somebody to assist with invoicing Hall users.
- Committee is continuing to investigate the best way to record guest speaker presentations at Club meetings.
- A number of members have indicated on their membership renewals their preference to receive *Whirrakee* as an email attachment. This is a great way to help the Club save on printing and postage costs, so please consider this option when renewing your membership. Contact a Committee member if you have any questions.
- The BFNC Financial Management Policy was formally adopted.
- Welcome to Stuart Symonds, whose nomination for membership of the Club was endorsed.
- Negotiations with the City of Greater Bendigo about the terms of our role as the managing body for the Golden Square Hall are continuing.
- Please contact a committee member is you have any suggestions for titles for the Club library.

Observations, August general meeting

Summarised by Matt Comer

John Lindner: at Ross St, White Hills, on Mon 1/8, for about 15 minutes, about 20 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen landing in the top of the canopy foliage flopping onto the wet leaves of Sugar Gums with outstretched wings, and wriggling around foliage bathing. After this they sat in the rain, with little calling and not feeding. Some birds put their wings up and held them up in the rain. One bird was a juvenile judging by a begging call. After they left, John counted 30 birds in the distance.

At Lakefield NP, QLD, this winter, 100s of Red-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen feeding on burnt ground. On inspection, there were many big, fat grass seeds on the ground. A Square-tailed Kite, Jabiru and Sunbird were seen the same day.

John McCallum: About 3 km east of Knowsley, the rail trail runs through farmland. John saw Red-capped and Flame Robins and Sittellas. He showed a photo of a disused wombat hole (no scats or footprints) in the rail trail embankment.

Ray Wallace: a Jacky Winter was seen in Bridge St, Bendigo, by a friend. It had the characteristic side-to-side tail wagging.

Marian Hill: On 2nd August and a few times since, heard spotted pardalote calling in the trees in Casley St. Long Gully for the first time since winter set in. Early signs of spring?

Diary

All Club meetings are held at the Golden Square Hall, Old High St Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, 14th September 7.30pm
Dr Martin Gomon, Senior Curator, Ichthyology, Museum Victoria
'Greeneyes, Tuskfishes, Basking Sharks ...all in a day's work'. All are welcome.

Excursions

BFNC Excursion to Knowsley SF, Sunday 18th September 2016
Location: Knowsley SF, east of Axedale.
Leaders: Anne Bridley, Glenise Moors
Meet at Golden Square Hall at 9am, returning by about 4pm. The round trip is roughly 70km. See page 3 for details

Regular Saturday excursion
Contact Richard on 0423418815 or email richard.goonan@oprtusnet.com.au
The dates for September are the following: September 3 – Mandurang, September 10 – Salomon Gully, September 17 – Wellsford, September 24 – Wildflower Drive.
See page 3 for more details

Regular Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30 the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone Maurie (0407 427 179) to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone and go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30, then the excursion is not on.

BFNC Workshop, 28th September 7.00pm
Workshop 11: 'Members night' Coordinator: Matt Comer **All presenters** must contact Matt via 0409 162 627 to register their intention to share an observations or story. See page 3 for more details

Family Nature Club
The Nature Club activities are continuing in 2016, so look out for announcements or check out their website. **Registration:**
Bendigonatureclub@gmail.com or 5443-1326
http://bendigofamilynatureclub.blogspot.com.au

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.
WRIN meetings held on the 1st Saturday of February, April, June, August, October and December at 1pm the Golden Square Hall

Bendigo Native Plant Group meeting.
All interested people are welcome to come along. Meeting starts at 7:30pm on the third Tuesday of the month, Golden Square Hall.
The next meeting is on the 20th September.

One Tree Hill - Cootamundra seedling removal
Club members are invited to participate in a Cootamundra removal activity. Earlier in the year, during one of our Saturday morning naturalist walks, the group located a patch of about 50 seedlings, if these are removed soon they will not produce further seed, and the site can be monitored in future to ensure any further seedlings are removed. As most of the seedlings are still small, they can be easily removed by hand. If successful, further opportunities to undertake targeted practical activities can be arranged. Parks Victoria have given initial approval for the club to undertake the activity, come along and meet local rangers Sam and Trent. Please RSVP (richard.goonan@optusnet.com.au) for further details, a date in September/October will be confirmed with those interested. Suggestions for other activities also welcome.